

# Character Builder 您好學嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4<sup>th</sup> tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about kitchens



Putonghua pronunciation: *lu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lo4*

Meaning: stove, furnace, oven, kiln, burner, grill, heater

爐 (radical 火 *huo3*, fire) means 火爐 (*huo3 lu2* = fire/burning-stove): 炭爐 (*tan4 lu2* = charcoal-burner/grill), 煤氣爐 (*mei2 qi4 lu2* = coal-gas-stove/oven), 電爐 (*dian4 lu2* = electric-stove/oven).

Engineers design 鍋爐 (*guo1 lu2* = pot-burner = boilers), 焚化爐 (*fen2 hua4 lu2* = burn-transform-furnace = incinerators), 剛出爐 (*gang1 chu1 lu2* = only-just-exit-oven) describes freshly-baked buns or latest news. 香爐 (*xiang1 lu2* = incense-burner)'s smoke helps meditation.

Kitchens have 爐灶 (*lu2 zao4* = stove-range). Second-in-charge quits, 另起爐灶 (*lin4 qi3 lu2 zao4* = elsewhere-build-stove-range = starts rival business/faction). 革命洪爐 (*ge2 ming4 hong2 lu2* = change-fate-big-furnace = Revolution's great furnace/influence) makes poet's art 爐火純青 (*lu2 huo3 chun2 qing1* = furnace-fire-pure-blue/green = utmost fine/pure).

by Diana Yue